

REMARKS

By this amendment, Applicants have amended claims 1, 3, 4, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 21 and have added claims 23-27. Support for the amendments to claims 1, 3, 4, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 21 and for new claims 23-27 may be found throughout the original disclosure. No new matter has been added. Currently, claims 1,3-8 and 10-27 are pending, and of those, 11-14, 19-20 and 22 are withdrawn. Reconsideration and timely allowance of the pending claims, in view of the above amendments and following remarks, are requested.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the indication of allowed subject matter in claims 3-4, 7 and 16-17, which are presently objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. However, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 3-4, 7 and 16-17 are patentable for at least the same reasons set forth below.

In reply to the Examiner's reasons for allowable subject matter in this application, Applicants respectfully submit that the allowable claims are patentable for their respective recitations of claimed combinations as a whole, without any particular criticality or distinguishing feature being attributable to any one or more of such features, and without any narrowing interpretation being imposed on any of such features. As such, Applicants respectfully submit that no one element or limitation in particular should be deemed to impart to or be required for patentability of the claims.

II. Rejections under USC §102(e) and §102(b)

In the Office Action dated December 15, 2006, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 5-10 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Hofer et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,828,772 B1), (hereinafter “Hofer”), and rejected claims 1, 5-6, 8, 10 and 15, 18 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Segers et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,404,483), (hereinafter “Segers”). Applicants respectfully traverse the prior art rejections, under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) and §102(b) for the following reasons.

As noted above, independent claim 1 as amended, positively recites that the compliant structure configured to compensate for at least one of a tilt and displacement between said object and said clamp, the compliant structure being provided at least between the rod and the support frame. These features are amply supported by the embodiments disclosed in the specification. (See, e.g., figs. 3a and 3b and for example, paragraph 0072).

Unlike the present invention, none of the asserted references teach or suggest each and every element of claim 1, including the features identified above. In particular, the Examiner rejected claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e), as allegedly being anticipated by Hofer. Applicants respectfully disagree.

The Hofer reference teaches a hollow flipper shaft 20 and a mounting head 90 which “locks the flipper shaft 20 to the wafer holding structure 10”. See, for example, Hofer at column 6, lines 30-33. In locking the flipper shaft down in place, there is nothing in Hofer that teaches a compliant structure being provided at least between the rod and the support frame, as required by claim 1. Accordingly, Hofer does not anticipate claim 1.

The Examiner also rejected claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Segers. Applicants respectfully disagree.

The Segers reference teaches that a pick-up hand 133 is provided on the end of arm 131, and further discusses two fingers 134 which are inserted underneath a wafer w, to pick-up the wafer w. The pick-up hand 133 carries coupling half 135a, which mates with a corresponding coupling half 135(b), on the pre-aligner 2. The coupling (135a, 135b) is used to ensure that the pick-up hand 133 is accurately positioned relative to the pre-aligner 2 when the wafer w is picked up. (See, Segers, column 7, lines 6-18; Figs. 5a-5c).

Again, there is nothing in Segers that teaches that the compliant structure being provided at least between the rod and the support frame, as required by claim 1. Accordingly, the Segers reference cannot anticipate claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that in addition to claim 1 not being anticipated by either Hofer or Segers; claims 3-8 and 10 depend from claim 1, and claims 3-8 and 10 are also patentable by virtue of dependency as well as for their additional recitations.

Furthermore, because independent claims 15, 18 and 21 recite similar patentable features as noted above, with respect to claim 1, claims 15, 18 and 21 are also patentable for at least the reasons submitted relative to claim 1. Additionally, because claims 16-17 depend from claim 15, claims 16-17 are also patentable by virtue of dependency as well as for their additional recitations.

Claims 23-27 are newly added to define additional subject matter that is novel and non-obvious over the art of record. Claims 23-25 are patentable over the art of record at least by virtue of their dependency from claim 1 and for the additional features recited therein. Claims 26-27 are patentable over the art of record for at least similar reasons as provided for claim 1 and for the features recited therein.

II. Conclusion

All matters having been addressed and in view of the foregoing, applicants respectfully request the entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration of this application and immediate allowance of all pending claims.

Applicants counsel remains ready to assist the Examiner in any way to facilitate and expedite the prosecution of this matter. If any point remains this an issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, please contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Please charge any fees associated with the submission of this paper to Deposit Account Number 033975, under order number 081468-0308853.

The Commissioner for Patents is also authorized to credit any over payments to the above-referenced Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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